

Just another reason to walk

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

A year and a half ago I took a simple step towards being healthier. I started walking my dog 30 minutes a day. At first, it was only three to five times a week, but it was every day by the end of the month.

I also started to walk around the block during each break at work. I found out that one lap is 1/4 of a mile, so I was walking close to a mile a day (1 lap every break and two during lunch). It wasn't until September of 2008 that something changed. I had stopped smoking on Jan. 2, 2008, but I found myself weighing about 230 lbs. and didn't want to buy bigger clothes anymore. (Some people in Holyoke might remember me as a 165 lb. high school senior).

I was three months from turning 40 and I began to use the gym at work. At that time, I was working from 10-6:30 and I would exercise after dropping off my daughters at school. I found my days were better each time I went to the gym.

It was also good to have coworkers motivate me to keep coming back to the gym. I did not overdo it; I took it one level at a time. In the beginning, I would only walk or jog on the treadmill and use the elliptical machine at a slow rate. While working out, I soon found my diet was changing. I usually would have a big bowl of ice cream after my dog walks. One night, I grabbed carrots instead of ice cream. I started making an effort to eat more fruit. I found if I ate a banana every day, I didn't get as many cramps when running.

Within two months, I had signed up for my first 5k walk/run and finished in less than 35 minutes. I was able to complete a stair climb in February 2009 for the American Lung Association, where I climbed 56 flights non-stop to the top of the Republic Plaza in downtown Denver.

This was a huge accomplishment for someone who had smoked a pack of cigarettes each day for almost 20 years. If you have ever smoked or been around a smoker, you can tell when they need a cigarette. They become irritable and restless. That is how I get now if I cannot work out.

As of today, I have lost over 60 lbs. I am very fortunate to have 24/7 access to a great gym facility right at work, but it all started with those daily walks. I ran my first 5k (3.1 miles) in October 2008, the second in May 2009, the third in June and the sixth in November.

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Each race I have participated in has been for a good cause; lung cancer, colon cancer, homelessness, and diabetes. This past year I signed up for the Tour de Cure Diabetes bike ride. I had intentions of doing the 31 mile course, but one week before the event, I went for a 50 mile ride around Denver that helped me to complete the 62 mile course in less than five hours.

The bike ride started in Longmont, went up to the top of Carter Lake, then down the canyon ending back at Longmont. While riding through the canyon, I realized this was something that I would never see or experience from sitting on the couch!

I have learned to take it slow and steady and not to place limits on my abilities. I have also taken out the word "try" from my vocabulary. I have finally found a positive way to channel my energy to help others while at the same time improving my own health.

I am going to participate in the 2010 Anthem Fight for Air Stair climb on Feb. 28 where I will run up 56 flights in Denver's tallest building (Republic Plaza) for the second time. My goal is to raise a dollar for every step, \$1,098.00 for the American Lung Association. As an ex-smoker, I hope to help those with asthma and help high school kids to quit smoking.

To participate, to pledge, or for more information, go to www.RunTheRepublic.com.

To pledge, select "Sponsor a participant." Pledge checks made payable to ALAC (American Lung Association in Colorado) may also be mailed to:

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